

PEABODY PRESS.

Fire Notes.

There is no more startling sound than the fire alarm in the stillness of the night, and especially if we find its warning note sounds the danger of our immediate home or property. It would prove an interesting study to portray the advance made in the methods of coping with the fiery element, and especially to describe the details of the fire departments in our large cities. But time and space forbid; we can do little else than make a hasty comparison of the changes in fire engines, and give a brief sketch of our home department.

In Rome the people had in use an instrument called a Siphon, no description of which has been preserved, but which it seems probable was an article in the home of the owner, and not for general use. At one time hose was used made of animals' intestines and attached to a bladder, from which water was forced. But little progress was made for many centuries. The rich and powerful lived in stone and durable mansions; the poor were of too little consequence to have public care. During the middle ages the curfew (from French *couver feu* or cover fire) bell was used, and all fires upon the hearth were to be extinguished when it sounded. From this originated the nine o'clock bell, still rung in many places in New England.

In 1518, in Augsburg, the first machines were used of which we have any particular notice. These were gradually improved until 1684, when the air chamber was first used. In 1670 leather hose was invented in Amsterdam by two men named Van Der Heide, who afterward invented the suction pipe in 1690. Since then the improvements on hand engines have been many—pumps, linen and rubber hose, patent nozzles, etc. In 1830 the first steam fire engine was built in London by a Mr. Braithwaite. In 1841 one was built in New York. The usefulness of steam fire engines has been gradually increased until, when we look at a Button engine of to-day, there seems little to be improved.

What a vast change it is, even in our town, from the old fire clubs, whose members had their bucket and their bed wrench, to one of our steamers, ready in a few minutes for work, never tiring, but unceasingly doing its duty until the danger is over! Every town and city most has had its great fire. Sept. 26, 1666, in London, 436 acres were burned over, 13,000 houses destroyed, and 200,000 obliged to camp out. Dec. 16, 1835, 600 warehouses and \$20,000,000 worth of property were destroyed. May 5, 1842, in Hamburg, Germany, 4200 buildings were burned, 100 lives and \$35,000,000 of property lost. July 4, 1866, the great fire in Portland burned \$15,000,000 worth, rendering 10,000 people homeless. Oct. 8th, 1871, the great fire in Chicago took place, which swept over 2125 acres, destroying 1600 stores, 28 hotels, 60 churches, 1500 residences, 250 lives, and the whole property lost being estimated at \$195,000,000. Nov. 9, 1872, Boston's blaze lessened the city's valuation by \$73,600,000. Beside these, Charleston, S. C., Albany, N. Y., San Francisco, Cal., Portland, (Oregon,) Quebec, Constantinople and St. John's have had their turns in receiving visits of the fire fiend, the latter being nearly destroyed in 1846, and suffering severely in 1877.

The record of Danvers and Peabody is a fair sample of the average progress made in most New England towns of any size. In early times the people had their fire buckets, and displayed the same interest which is shown to-day, when the more thoroughly organized department is summoned. We have seen no town record previous to 1828. This gives the expenses of the fire department at \$196.19. About this date the Columbian Fire Club and Warren Fire Club were in existence. In 1830 the Danvers Fire Club was incorporated. In 1849 the South Danvers Fire Club was organized. The object of these clubs was to serve as a protective force to property in danger, and also render any aid which could be given. The latter organization still lives, its secretary, Mr. James N. Estes, collecting its annual dues; but its labors are chiefly confined to social gatherings occasionally. Its funds, however, we believe are used for benevolent purposes. The town, then Danvers, had previous to 1822

a small engine, which in that year was changed for the Niagara, which was kept where Sutton Block now is. Some years after Messrs. Stephen Blaney and William H. Little bought it. The Eagle, another hand engine, was procured in 1836, and stood where the Niagara had. When the Gen. Foster was moved to Washington street, it was moved into a building (now the Police Station on Foster Street) located where the garden of Caleb W. Osborne is, next to this office. It was sold in 1866. Isaac Hardy was the first foreman of the General Foster. It was bought in 1843, and was disbanded in 1876. It was located next this office, and later moved to Washington street, making room for the Eagle. In 1830 an engine named Torrent was procured, stationed near where the hay scales now are. Some years later a second Torrent was bought and placed in the "Lane," near Andover street. This is still part of the force, although it has been moved into a new house a short distance from the old one. In 1843 General Sutton gave the town the use of the Volunteer, a Button tub, which was located near Grove street, where A. Lammus' carpenter shop now is. In 1854 a second Volunteer—a Button tub—took its place, and in 1856 was moved on to Pierpont street. It was remodeled in 1860.

In 1856 the town of Danvers was divided, and South Danvers became a separate town, which in 1869 took the name of Peabody. In 1864 a contract was made for a steam fire engine, which the town still has, known as Steamer 1, and in 1874 a second, now No. 2, was obtained. In 1870 the Miles Osborn Hook and Ladder was organized, and afterward changed to Abel Proctor. In 1876 S. C. Bancroft engine was procured, and a house and land purchased, an appropriation of \$1650 being made for that purpose.

Union Hose Company was formed April 30, 1869, and changed to Eagle Hose, No. 1, Oct. 1, 1872. It has the bell of the old Eagle Hand Engine.

The town has not suffered more than its share by fire, except in the year 1843, (which we notice presently), its firemen always responding promptly and working faithfully. Sept. 22, 1843, a great fire occurred. The alarm was sounded between twelve and one, and a conflagration followed, which broke out in a wheelwright shop of Wm. Berry, which destroyed most of the buildings on the Square, and others, valued at \$50,000. Where the Post Office building now is was a fine brick hotel, the Essex Coffee House, which, with its outbuildings, was destroyed. The Old South Church, a fine edifice, standing where the present one does, valued at \$10,000, was also burned. The old Tavern house, moved to make way for the Essex Coffee House, to the site of the Shackley house on Foster street, was burned. The equinoctial gale was raging with great violence; an immense crowd gathered from Marblehead, Beverly, Salem and Lynn, some of those places sending engines to help. A full account was given in the Press of Sept. 16th, 1868.

The following gentlemen served the town at different times as Chief Engineers:

- 1855—Stephen Osborne.
- 1856-7—John V. Stevens.
- 1858—Jonathan E. Osborne.
- 1859—John V. Stevens.
- 1860-7—Wm. H. Little.
- 1868-71—George C. Peirce.
- 1871-80—D. S. Littlefield.

Mr. Littlefield is the oldest member of the department, which he joined in 1844. In 1858 he was made engineer and has been one ever since, and chief for nine years.

In 1857 the value of the property of the Fire Department was \$5,883.07; by the Town Report Feb. 15, 1879, it was \$60,965.00.

The force is made up as follows: D. S. Littlefield, Chief Engineer; Nathan H. Poor 2d, Daniel B. Lord, Charles G. Folsom, Wm. W. Reed, Assistant Engineers.

Gen. Sutton Steam Fire Engine Co., No. 1, 18 men. Wm. J. Roome, Foreman; Assistant, John A. Hart; Clerk and Treasurer, W. H. Joll.

Excelsior Steam Fire Engine Co., No. 2, 18 men. S. S. Littlefield, Foreman; T. J. Noyes, Assistant; Frank S. Clough, Clerk.

Eagle Hose Company, 18 men. F. O. Parker, Foreman; Assistant, C. K. Mallard; 2d Assistant, F. A. Wilkinson;

Clerk and Treasurer, Otis W. Copeland.

Abel Proctor H. & L. Co., 25 men. Jerry B. Mack, Foreman; John D. McKean, Assistant; William C. Beckett, Clerk; Otis Brown, Treasurer.

These are all situated in the brick engine house on Lowell street, which was built in 1873, and is valued at \$36,000. The two Steamers are valued at \$7500; Hose Carriage at \$500, and the H. & L. Carriage at \$900. The engineers of the steamers are John A. P. Sumner and Wm. H. Pingree. The building is under the care of the latter, and is well worth an examination, and all who attempt such will find Mr. Pingree ready, with courtesy and information, to make it pleasant and interesting. In the basement are large tanks to wash hose, and a boiler to heat and make steam for the engines. Above are two compartments, one occupied by the Steamers, and the other by the H. & L. and Hose Carriages, and over these pleasant rooms for the different companies, that of the Hook & Ladder containing an excellent portrait of the late Abel Proctor, and that of the Steamer No. 1, a fine likeness of General Sutton. The rooms are cosy, without being cramped, and full of knickknacks, souvenirs of musters and pleasant gatherings. From the roof a fine view of the town may be obtained. On the northeast corner there is a tall hose tower, and in the rear a stable where the horses, which are used in the town teams, are kept. The drivers of the horses, David B. Brown and Alfred Currier, sleep in the building, ready for service when needed. There is also a staunch wagon used to convey coal, built by C. W. Brine, at a cost of \$200.—There is a small room for the use of the Chief Engineer and his assistants. The building is admirably adapted for its purpose.

The Torrent, No. 3, is a Hunneman tub, and the first of that make to draft water from the stern. It is located on Endicott street, near the junction of Central and Andover streets. It has 40 men. Foreman, Charles H. Hooper; 1st Assistant, Simon P. Buxton; 2d Assistant, F. A. Wilkinson; Clerk and Treasurer, John O. Buxton. The Torrent is a small engine, but the boys have always done good service with it, and have taken several prizes, competing with engines of note that claimed they could do big things.

Sept. 17, 1874, first prize of \$200, at South Weymouth; distance, 204 ft. 11 3-8 in.

Sept. 16, 1875, first prize of \$200, at Lynn; distance, 184 ft. 6 in.

Aug. 26, 1876, third prize of silver trumpet, at Lynn; also second prize of \$75, in hose carriage races.

Oct. 5, 1876, second prize of \$50, in hose carriage races, at Waltham.

Sept. 20, 1877, first prize of \$150, at Lynn; distance, 163 ft. 2 in.

Oct. 11, 1877, fourth prize of \$75, at Danvers; distance, 180 ft. 5 3-4 in.

July 24, 1879, fifth prize of \$50, at Danvers; distance, 206 ft. 11 1-4 in.

Volunteer Engine, No. 4, 40 men, is situated on Pierpont street. Foreman, M. W. Cummings; 1st Assistant, James H. Roman; 2d Assistant, John Moreland; Clerk, F. P. Bailey; Treasurer, P. L. Winchester, Jr. The Volunteer has always been prompt to respond and faithful in service, and is a creditable portion of our praiseworthy department.

It has taken the following prizes:

Oct. 5, 1876, third prize of \$25, at Waltham, Mass.; distance played, 195 ft. 7 in.

July 4, 1877, first prize of \$125, at Biddeford, Maine; distance, 192 ft. 4 in.

Sept. 5, 1877, first prize of \$200, at Gardner, Mass.; distance, 181 ft. 7 1-2 in.

Sept. 20, 1877, third prize, a silver trumpet, valued at \$50, at Wyoma; distance, 155 ft. 1 3-4 in. It was a very windy day, which accounts for the small play.

Oct. 11, 1877, first prize of \$250, at Danvers; distance, 198 ft. 5 1-4 in.

The bell on the engine house is one of three which originally were upon the Convent, "The Three Sisters," in Rome, Italy. They were brought to this country, and for a while there was one on the E. R. R. depots in Boston, Salem and Newburyport. Gen. Sutton bought this one in Salem, and gives the use of it while the Volunteer Company exists.—On one side is a cross; on the other the figure of a saint, and between them the letters L-T-O-A-A. Around the top is this inscription: MADRE NVESTRA SANTA CLARA ORA PRO NOBIS ANO D E 1738. Around the bottom is the following, which we give divided as nearly as we could distinguish it: SEYZ IERONESTAS

CAMPANAS SIENDO ABADIA L DISTER
COMBEN LAM SOR D ANA DEMEL GARLJO.

S. C. Bancroft, No. 5, 40 men, is at South Peabody, in the Rocks, so called. Although some distance from the thickly settled portion of the town, it contrives to get over the ground quite lively and report in fair season.

Sept. 20, 1877, it took the second prize of \$75, at Lynn; distance, 161 ft. 2 1-4 in.

It will be seen by these hasty notes that Peabody is well prepared to meet the alarm of fire, our men will compare favorably with other places, our machines are good. We believe there are not many towns where the firemen attend more strictly to business when necessary, or where more judicious work is done. A fireman's life is full of excitement, which to some takes away the sense of danger, and yet we should realize the peril undergone and the amount of labor performed, for which a mere nominal compensation is given. We are not finding fault with the amount paid, but we want our people to realize the obligation they are under to the boys who fight the demon of fire, and be ready, if occasion demands, such as a fair, a parade, a muster, to give the boys extra help and favor.